

Australians are renowned for acting swiftly and generously when disaster strikes.

Floods, fires, storms and other disasters can stir up strong emotions and a keen desire to help those affected. This often results in enormous volumes of donated goods from individuals, communities and businesses. The sizeable task of then managing donations can include the need to transport, store, sort and delivery as well as dispose of any unneeded or unwanted goods.

Disaster resilience is the collective responsibility of all sectors of society and the business community can, and does, play a strong role in supporting a community's resilience to disaster.

Increased involvement of the business community in pre-disaster preparations as well as in recovery would greatly assist South Australia to build more disaster resilient communities.

What is the project

Between July 2012 and July 2013 the State Recovery Office will be:

- ❖ Supporting South Australian businesses, as well as national and international businesses operating in the State, to better understand:
 - what recovery is and how it works
 - the unintended consequences of unsolicited giving
 - how best to support communities during the recovery phase
 - how to access relevant and timely information to help inform donation decision making.

- ❖ Working with the business community to develop a Flexible Disaster Resilience Partnership model that will:
 - enable businesses looking to support the recovery of those affected by disasters, to target their support according to identified need
 - formalise the involvement of targeted businesses in pre-disaster and recovery planning for the State.

Background

The 2009 Victorian bushfires resulted in more than 40,000 pallets of goods from across Australia that took up more than 50,000 square metres of storage space. The cost for storage, staff and transport amounted to more than \$8m. Services in the fire affected areas were severely stretched as a result of donations of goods arriving without warning and without resources to sort, store, handle and distribute.

Following the bushfires research was undertaken to identify the level of involvement of the business community in the recovery effort, specifically through corporate donations, and their thoughts about this process.

The research indicated that most of the businesses involved wanted more information about how recovery works, how best to support communities in recovery and what happens with their donations. In addition it was identified that only a very small percentage of businesses had a written policy specific to making disaster related donations.

How will the business community be involved

Over 200 South Australian businesses participated in a phone survey about corporate donations in 2010. In addition focus groups were held with national businesses based in Victoria and New South Wales in 2011. This information has been used to inform the project plan and the range of tools and materials being prepared.

A project reference group has been established for the life of the project. Members include representatives from the business community, local and state government and the emergency management sector with an interest/experience in corporate social responsibility, sustainability, community engagement, business continuity and emergency management.

The role of the reference group is to provide advice and information on the appropriateness of identified strategies and review and comment on materials developed during the project.

In addition businesses with a strong interest in the project are welcome to contact the Project Manager directly to find out how to keep informed or to discuss how to get involved.

Acknowledgement

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